

## *Darlene Kay Hooley*

1939–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

DEMOCRAT FROM OREGON

1997–



Image courtesy of the Member

**A FORMER OREGON PUBLIC SCHOOLTEACHER**, Darlene Hooley began a long climb in state politics in the 1970s, inspired initially by defective equipment at a local playground. Hooley served in city, county, and state government for 20 years before winning election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996. During her tenure in Congress, Representative Hooley has focused on identity theft and data security, education funding, affordable health care and prescription drug coverage, the National Guard, and veterans' health care.

Darlene Olson was born on April 4, 1939, in Williston, North Dakota, to Clarence Alvin Olson and Alyce Rogers Olson. When she was eight years old, her family moved to Salem, Oregon. Darlene Olson earned a B.S. in education from Oregon State University in 1961, and pursued postgraduate work at Oregon State University and Portland State University from 1963 until 1965. She also taught reading, music, and physical education in Oregon. Darlene Olson married John Hooley, a fellow teacher, and they raised two children, Chad and Erin, before they divorced in 1997. The lack of city response to playground equipment maintenance issues at a local public park, where her son had fallen off a swing onto the asphalt, convinced Hooley to enter politics. In 1976, she was the first woman elected to the West Linn city council. Four years later, she earned a spot in the state house of representatives, where she served until 1987. In the legislature, she chaired the environmental and energy committees where she helped pass energy conservation measures, recycling legislation, and a rewrite of land use planning laws. In her third term, she served on the Oregon house of representatives' ways and means committee, chairing its education subcommittee. She focused on establishing public kindergarten, passing pay equity laws, and reforming the state's welfare system. In 1987, she became the first woman member of the Clackamas County commission where she served until her election to Congress.<sup>1</sup>

## FOR FURTHER READING

*Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress*, “Darlene Hooley,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov>

## NOTES

- 1 *Politics in America*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003): 847–848; *Almanac of American Politics*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: National Journal Inc., 2003): 1344–1345; “Official Biography of Darlene Hooley,” <http://www.house.gov/hoooley/biography.htm> (accessed 24 November 2004).
- 2 “Election Information, 1920 to Present,” Office of the Clerk, <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/index.html>.
- 3 “Official Biography of Darlene Hooley,” <http://www.house.gov/hoooley/biography.htm>; *Politics in America*, 2004: 847–848.

In 1996, Hooley entered the race for an Oregon seat in the U.S. House of Representatives covering much of the northern Willamette Valley from West Linn in the north to the state capital, Salem, and the university town of Corvallis to the south. With backing from major women’s political action committees such as EMILY’s List, Hooley prevailed in the three-way Democratic primary with 51 percent of the vote. In the general election, she faced Republican Jim Bunn, a first-term incumbent. Her platform contrasted with the Republican “Contract with America” and was especially critical of Medicare cuts. Hooley defeated Bunn by a 52 to 45 percent margin in a race with two independent candidates. In her subsequent four re-election campaigns, Hooley has won by margins of between 53 and 57 percent of the vote.<sup>2</sup>

During the first year of the 105th Congress (1997–1999), Representative Hooley was elected Democratic freshman class president. She was then elected as Regional Representative to the Democratic Steering Committee in the 106th–107th Congresses (1999–2003). Hooley was appointed as Whip-at-Large (106th and 107th Congresses) and then Senior Whip. She received seats on the Banking and Financial Services Committee (later renamed Financial Services) and the Science Committee. In the 106th Congress, Hooley took leave from serving on the Science Committee to serve on the influential Budget Committee, but was termed out in the 109th Congress (2005–2007) and returned to the Science Committee as Ranking Member on the Research Subcommittee. In the 108th Congress (2003–2005), she added a third assignment by accepting a position on the Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

On the Financial Services Committee, Hooley has become the leader of ID theft prevention efforts and for increased medical and financial privacy. In the 108th Congress, Hooley’s consumer protection legislation providing all Americans the ability to see their credit reports from all three major credit bureaus annually at no cost was enacted.

Locally, Hooley has proven successful in securing public investments in Oregon’s 5th District, including millions of dollars in county timber payments in lieu of taxes on federal lands for local schools and roads, federal funding for transportation, port and infrastructure needs, and agricultural research and bio-medical research funding.

In 2002, Representative Hooley voted against the authorization of the use of military force in Iraq. During the occupation of Iraq, she has been a vocal advocate for the proper training and equipping of troops serving overseas, and has worked to correct inequities between the active duty and National Guard. As the Ranking Member of the Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Hooley worked to improve the veterans’ health care and increase funding for its medical centers.<sup>3</sup>